# Progress Report for Mining Technology Work Plan
**December 1, 1999**

## Introduction

This report outlines the progress made to date for the Mining Technology Work Plan. This work plan, which can be reviewed in its entirety on a separate page on this web site, is being carried out by OSM, WVDEP, COE and EPA. The purpose of the work plan is to examine both current, alternative, and future mining techniques to assess the physical and economic feasibility of reclamation techniques to minimize adverse impacts to streams, other environmental values, and local communities.. For further information, you may wish to contact Ken Eltschlager at (412) 937-2169.

**Progress to Date:** The existing Mining Technology Work plan calls for a comparison of different mining and reclamation scenarios of mountaintop removal to evaluate the financial impact on mining operations. To date the plan remains unfunded at $325,000. Even if the funds are available and a consultant was sought to complete the work, the timetable for completion of the EIS could not be met. To advertise and let a contract of this size would take at least 6 months. Then the work would take 2-3 months and not be completed until mid summer 2000.

The recent decision by Judge Haden has heightened the importance of this component of the overall EIS Work plan. The decision results in the need of an ephemeral stream scenario for evaluation. The importance is significant enough to warrant inclusion in the existing Work plan or as a separate evaluation.

**Ephemeral Streams Scenario:** In this scenario, the fills become smaller and more numerous. Physical limitations on space will limit mining depths. Key will be how ephemeral streams are defined in terms of location and areal extent (WV definition or Dr. Norris methodology?). Once the definition is set, the impact to current mining methodologies can be gauged. The scenarios should include AOC+, ephemeral streams buffer minus 100 feet meeting AOC+ (worse-case) and ephemeral streams buffer with no offset.

The optimum reclamation configuration can be determined through an iterative process.

1. Conduct a simple volumetric evaluation based on the lowest seam to be mined. The main question is, "Will the spoil fit into the mined areas and valley fills outside of intermittent and perennial streams?"

2. If the spoil fits then cost the mine plan to achieve optimum

3. If the spoil does not fit, "How far down stream must the fill go to accommodate the mine?"

4. With a combination MTR and contour mining on the lower seam, "How much mineral must be left to stay within boundaries?"

**Options for Completing the Technical Study**

No funding has been provided to date and full funding is not expected. The following options are available to complete the ephemeral streams scenario, a pared down version of the original work plan. At this time Option 4 appears to be the most likely choice.

1. Issue a Federal contract. If fund become available the work would take 2-3 months and not be completed until mid summer 2000.

2. Federal agencies complete the scenario. None of the current EIS agencies have the personnel or computer expertise to complete the plan. Nor do they have A&E firms available.

3. Coal Industry completes the scenario: The coal industry has offered to do the work plan in part. They have the expertise and experience conducting such evaluations.

4. OSM directed stakeholder team: A co-operative effort between Federal, State, Industry and Environmental stakeholders can capitalize on each of their resources to complete the task.

5. No action: If no action is taken, the economic impact on the industry will be unknown.